The Madison Connection

Communication Arts Professor Tino Balio

The Madison Connection is a newsletter published by the Department of Communication Arts at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. It provides information about the department, its faculty, and its alumni. The newsletter also includes articles on topics such as media and communication studies, as well as updates on events and activities happening within the department. The newsletter is available online through the department's website.

The objective of the course, Balio said, “We want to promote role models for students to show them what they might achieve after they graduate.”

Jim Abrahams (BA ’66), the director, screenwriter, and producer who collaborated with UW alums David and Jerry Zucker in the making of such mainstream comedy hits as *Airplane!* (1980), *Top Secret!* (1984), *Ruthless People* (1986) and *The Naked Gun* (1988), led off the series with a presentation titled “15 Rules of Comedy.” He was followed by Sidney IwHater (BA ’71), a former vice-president of Fox Kids Network, who discussed animation and children’s Saturday morning cartoons.

Broadway producers Rocco Landesman (BA ’69) and Rick Steiner (BA ’68), the originators of *The Secret Garden*, *Smokey Joe’s Cafe*, *The Producers*, and other hit musicals, talked about the current Broadway musical scene. They were responsible for over 100 television movies, mini-series and series; Edward Greenberg (MA ’76), managing director and global telecom strategist for Morgan Stanley; Lee deBose (BA ’74), media consultant, who spent 19 years as an executive at Home Box Office where he helped the cable network grow from its infancy; Jerry Zucker (BS ’72); and Walter Mirisch (BA ’42), one of Hollywood’s most creative producers who in partnership with his brothers Harold and Marvin Mirisch were responsible for such Academy Award winners as *The Apartment*, *West Side Story*, and *In the Heat of the Night*.

Balio worked with the UW Foundation to help bring the alumni to campus. More information about the UW Foundation is available at: www.uwfoundation.wisc.edu.

To find the answer, go to http://commarts.wisc.edu/Alumni

Hint: Da Video

GUESS WHO?

STUDENT PROFILE Michelle LaVigne

To continue my research in this area, I have been invited to participate in the International Water Demand Conference in Jordan. At the conference, I will share communication strategies that promote water conservation programs that I began developing while working as a consultant in water resource management.

Besides water rights, I have an abiding interest in art and aesthetics, which stems from my past experiences dancing for ballet companies from Connecticut to Nevada. Brotman also plans to travel throughout the country and around the world to promote MT&R’s growing collection. He wants to convey the message that “the museum is a terrific resource for anyone who is interested in television and radio.”

Brotman feels that his education at UW-Madison connects in a central way with his work at the museum. Recalling his life as a young student in the 1970s, Brotman believes that the academic environment at UW gave him a strong foundation in the history of broadcasting from radio to television, as well as an early appreciation of new technologies like cable. He has fond memories of his former professors and says that he is very pleased to be working with current faculty members in the Department.

Extending a warm invitation to fellow Badgers, Brotman says, “The museum’s collection will help you get a solid grounding in various aspects of media and communication.” For information on membership and admission, you may visit the museum’s website at www.mtr.org.
In August 1974, I came to Madison to begin graduate studies in communication arts. The Department was a welcoming place for me, an environment that was second to none and set my career in motion. I’m thinking of that experience now because Professor David Bordwell, the teacher and scholar, has had the most profound influence on me (and many other students of film and media) in retiring this year, ending a brilliant thirty-year career at UW. The opportunity to study with faculty like him brought me here, and the presence of other colleagues like him makes it a pleasure to continue my career here.

David Bordwell, the most productive and influential film scholar in the profession over the last three decades, with some twelve books and scores of scholarly articles to his credit, is often credited for helping to establish film studies as a serious academic discipline. He has also been one of our Department’s finest teachers, an energetic lecturer who brings cutting-edge research—often his own—into the classroom.

His retirement encourages me to reflect on the contributions of other outstanding Communication Arts faculty who have since retired, but who helped make this the leading communication department in the nation. Professor Richard Johnson, the nation’s authority on the effect of television on children, retired from UW in 2000, but he showed no signs of slowing down. She continues to produce research that influences social policy on this important issue, and she has just published a children’s book, “Teddy’s TV Trouble.”

These are just a few of the splendid Communication Arts faculty I had the privilege of knowing, first as a student and then as a colleague. Through the Common Arts newsletter, we try to keep our alumni updated on the accomplishments of our current faculty. But those of us who are Communication Arts alumni also like to think back on the pleasures of studying with the distinguished faculty of past decades. I expect that readers of this newsletter can think of other Communication Arts emeriti who especially shaped their educations. Let us hear about them.

David Bordwell: Closing Credits

Professor Michael Curtin (MA ’86, PhD ’90) has been appointed as a research associate and visiting professor in the Women’s Studies and Religion Program at the Harvard Divinity School for the 2004–2005 academic year. Professor Stephen Lucas received both of the Text and Academic Authors Association’s top book awards for 2004: The Texty Award for the best new book or edition published in 2004 and the William Holmes McGuffy Longevity Award for excellence over a sustained period of time for his text “The Art of Public Speaking,” eighth edition (W.Graw-Hill, 2004).
A MESSAGE From the Chair

In August 1974, I came to Madison to begin graduate studies in communication arts. The Department offered me an education that was second to none and set my career in motion. I’m thinking of that experience now because Professor David Bordwell, the teacher and scholar who has had the most profound influence on me (and many other students of film and media) is retiring this year, ending a brilliant thirty-year career at UW. The opportunity to study with faculty like him brought me here, and the presence of other colleagues like him makes it a pleasure to continue my career here.

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His retirement encourages me to reflect on the contributions of other outstanding Communication Arts faculty who have since retired, but who helped make this the leading communication department in the nation. Professor Richard Dyer, who retired from UW in 1990, helped create the Department’s excellent broadcasting program, and he trained scores of students for successful careers in the media. He also shared his expertise with the public by serving as director of broadcasting at WHA-TV.

These are just a few of the splendid Communication Arts faculty I had the privilege of knowing, first as a student and then as a colleague. Through the Communication Arts newsletter, we try to keep our alumni updated on the accomplishments of our current faculty. But those of us who are Communication Arts graduates also like to think back on the pleasures of studying with the distinguished faculty of past decades. I expect that readers of this newsletter will enjoy the powerful, incisive articles written by some of our outstanding Communication Arts emeriti who especially shaped our educations. Let us hear them about:

Professors Dillard and Solomon Bid Farewell

After a combined 33 years of service to UW-Madison, Professors Denise Solomon and James Dillard are leaving for Pennsylvania State University, starting in new positions there in the fall of 2004. Dillard said, “Our time here in Madison has been delightful and we have the highest respect for the university. But, we also welcome the challenges and opportunities that await us in the Penn State Department of Communication Arts & Sciences.” Solomon added that she would particularly miss working with UW’s terrific undergraduates. “I’ve had the most wonderful students in my classes, and I’ve been particularly fortunate to work with some excellent students on my research team.”

One of the many advantages of attending the University of Wisconsin-Madison is that students are educated by professors who lead their fields of study and truly love their work. That advantage is exemplified by Professors C. David Mortensen. Professor Mortensen is completing his 33rd year as a member of the UW faculty, and when many professors might be slowing down and eyeing retirement, he is looking forward to the publication of yet another book. The book is currently under contract and, according to Professor Mortensen, “The findings are the most significant of my career.”

Professor Mortensen has spent the majority of his career investigating the communicative nature of how understanding and, consequently, misunderstanding occurs in relations, which describes the essence of human interaction, focusing on the elements that at times make communication simple and efficient and at other times highly problematic. His latest book not only summarizes the entire body of research currently available on those subjects, but also presents conclusions that are particularly illuminating. Professor Mortensen’s data came from 400 people who provided a total of 1600 personal accounts of prototypical events in which agreements, disagreements, understandings and misunderstandings occurred. These accounts were then transcribed and computer analyzed to determine the variables, themes, and structures inherent to the process of human interaction. Thanks to the results of his current study, Professor Mortensen says that “we now have solid evidence of what people think, feel, say and do to produce working agreements and solid understandings. We also get strong evidence of what people do to subvert or undermine relational ties.”

You can start looking for the book soon. In the meantime, there is no question where you will be able to find Professor Mortensen—he’ll be here working on his next discovery in interpersonal communication.

Understanding Misunderstanding

HONORS & AWARDS

Professor Michael Curtin (MA ’86, PhD ’90) was selected as the incoming director of the University of Wisconsin Global Studies Program, leading a faculty of 183 professors from eight schools across the university. Professor Curtin also received an honorable mention for best essay of the year in the field of media studies for his article, “Mediа Capital: Towards the Study of Spatial Flows.” The article was recognized by the review committee of the Kovacs Essay Competition of the Society for Cinema and Media Studies.

Professor Ben Singer was named as a Vilas Associate. This award provides summer salary and an additional stipend to further his research. Academic staff member Jim Ferris won the 2004 Main Street Rag Annual Poetry Book Award for his collection The Hospital Poems. This major accomplishment was announced and decided by noted poet and columnist Edward Hirsch following a nationwide competition. Professor Susan Zaske’s (BA ’89, MA ’92, PhD ’97) has been appointed as a research associate and visiting professor in the Women’s Studies and Religion Program at the Harvard Divinity School for the 2004–2005 academic year. Professor Stephen Lucas received both for the Text and Academic Author’s Association top book awards for 2004: The Texty Award for the best new book or edition published in 2004 and the William Holmes McGuffey Longevity Award for excellence over a sustained period of time for his text The Art of Public Speaking, eighth edition (McGraw-Hill, 2004).
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William Immerman and Tino Balio

Communication Arts Professor Tino Balio inaugurated an innovative class this semester by bringing back successful alumni in the entertainment business to participate in a course he taught titled “The American Film Industry in the Age of Television” at the University of Wisconsin–Madison.

In the Heat of the Night

William Immerman (BS ‘59), a specialist in television documentaries on film history, who was an executive at Home Box Office where he worked at the museum. Recalling his life as a young student in the 1970s, Brotman believes that the academic environment at UW gave him a strong foundation in the history of broadcasting from radio to television, as well as an early appreciation of new technologies like cable. He has fond memories of his former professors and says that he is very pleased to be working with current faculty members in the Department.

Extending a warm invitation to fellow Badgers, Brotman says, “The museum’s collection will help you get a solid grounding in various aspects of media and communication.” For information on membership and admission, you may visit the museum’s website at www.mtr.org.

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The Museum of Television & Radio (MT&R) in March.

As the president of MT&R, Brotman plans to re-orient the museum’s extensive collections to attract the next generation of patrons in the 21st century by converting many of the old radio and television programs from analog to digital formats. Brotman would also like to make these digital collections available on-line to patrons who cannot come to the museum’s two locations in New York and California. Brotman also plans to travel throughout the country and around the world to promote MT&R’s growing collection.

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SUMMER 2004

STUDENT PROFILE

Michelle LaVigne

Water-Ballet

Water is a source of political and social conflict, not only in the Middle East but also in the United States. Discussions about water allocation establish more than policies; they assign certain values to water and in doing so create, sustain, and rupture relationships between countries and people.

My master’s thesis analyzes water rights negotiations between the U.S. and Mexico in 1944. These negotiations produced a treaty between the two nations and established an international commission that continues to mediate water issues dealing with quality and quantity. Thus far, I am focusing on how debates over water rights produce and use various definitions for this commodity and what these definitions tell us about how people understand and value it. More generally, I am interested in using this specific case to raise questions about how definitions function rhetorically.

To continue my research in this area, I have been invited to participate in the International Water Demand Conference in Jordan. At the conference, I will share communication strategies that promote water conservation programs that I began developing while working as a consultant in water resources management.

Besides water rights, I have an abiding interest in art and aesthetics, which stems from my past experiences dancing for ballet companies from Connecticut to Nevada. I have danced in productions of Cinderella, Giselle; and, of course, the Nutcracker, while working with noted choreographers. Here at UW, I performed in the faculty dance concert last November and look forward to performing on campus again. The Department of Comm Arts and the greater university community have enabled me to combine my academic interests and my life’s passion into stimulating research and artistic enjoyment.

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